



United States Department of Agriculture

Draft Decision Notice

Moroni Exploration Project

U.S. Forest Service
Ashley National Forest, Roosevelt-Duchesne Ranger District
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Heber-Kamas Ranger District
Wasatch County, Utah

This decision notice incorporates all information in the environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI), as well as information included in the project record.

Decision and Rationale

I have decided to authorize the proposed action for Moroni Exploration project as described in the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact, including all of the required Project Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures.

The project will involve exploratory trenching and bulk sampling for locatable minerals on the proponent's existing mining claims, within the Iron Mine Creek area of the Duchesne District of the Ashley National Forest. For needed heavy equipment access to the exploration sites, a closed but existing road on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NF would be re-opened for project use, and then approximately 0.59 miles of new temporary road would be constructed on the Ashley NF. The sampling areas and temporary road would be reclaimed upon project completion. The purposes and needs for this project are to respond to a Plan of Operations submitted by the Proponents and authorize them to explore their existing mining claims in a responsible manner.

The Environmental Assessment, based on best available data and current science, documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based. Because there were no unresolved conflicts or reasonable alternatives brought up during scoping, we analyzed only the proposed action (36 CFR 220.7[b][2][i]). The selected proposed action will allow the project proponents to explore their existing mining claims, and with the added project design criteria and mitigation measures, will have only minimal and acceptable effects. I made the decision to implement this project based on the environmental analysis and taking into account interdisciplinary team input and comments on the proposal.

Summary of Public Involvement

This project has been included on the Ashley National Forest website since January 2021, and the action has appeared in the Ashley National Forest schedule of proposed actions (SOPA) since April 2021. In February 2021, we solicited comments on the project from the public, local agencies, and representatives of the local Ute Tribe.

In response to our February 2021 scoping letter, legal notice, and outreach efforts, we received two formal comment letters: one letter from the Environmental Protection Agency, and one letter

from the State of Utah, neither of which opposed the project. We also communicated and coordinated efforts with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest since portions of the project extend onto that Forest in addition to the Ashley National Forest.

Findings Required by Relevant Laws/Regulations

Findings required by laws and regulations applicable to the project can be found in the EA - FONSI and project record. The project is consistent with our 1986 Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and complies with all other applicable laws and regulations as discussed in the EA - FONSI and project record.

Administrative Review & Objection Opportunities

This project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B.

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with §218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted, timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after designated opportunities.

Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual; objections received on behalf of an organization are considered those of the organization only (§218.5). Names and addresses of objectors will become part of the public record.

Incorporation of documents by reference in the objection is permitted only as provided for at §218.8(b). Minimum content requirements of an objection, identified in §218.8(d), include:

- Objector's name and address, telephone number if available, and signature or other verification of authorship upon request.
- Identification of the lead objector when multiple names are listed, along with verification upon request.
- Name of project, name and title of the responsible official, and national forest/ranger district of project.
- Description of the specific aspects of the proposed project objected to; how environmental law, regulation, or policy would be violated; and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection.
- Statement demonstrating the connection between prior specific written comments on this project and the content of the objection, unless the objection issue arose after the designated opportunity for comment.

Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed with the reviewing officer (Susan Eickhoff, Ashley Forest Supervisor) within 45 days (§218.26) of the publication of the legal notice of opportunity to object in the Uintah Basin Standard. The publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Electronic objections in common formats (.pdf, .doc, .rtf, or .txt) may be emailed to objections-intermtn-regional-office@usda.gov with *Moroni Exploration* in the subject line. If you do not have access to email, objections may also be faxed to 801-625-5277 to the attention of *Objection: Moroni Exploration*, sent by mail to the following address, or hand-delivered during normal business hours of 0800 to 1630, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays: Objection Reviewing Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401. It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (§218.9).

Implementation Date

I intend to implement this decision immediately following release of the final DN (expected August 2021). As per 36 CFR 218.12, if no objection is received within the legal objection period, the final decision may be signed and implemented on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the objection-filing period. If an objection is filed, the decision cannot be signed or implemented until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all objections.

Contact

More information about this project is available on the Forest's website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59348>. If you need additional information, please contact: David Herron (david.herron@usda.gov; 435-790-1549) at the Ashley National Forest's Duchesne District Office, 85 West Main, Duchesne, Utah 84021.

DRAFT DECISION NOTICE (NO SIGNATURE)

KRISTY GROVES

District Ranger, Ashley National Forest, Roosevelt-Duchesne Ranger District

DRAFT DECISION NOTICE (NO SIGNATURE)

DANIEL JAUREGUI

District Ranger, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Heber-Kamas Ranger District